

# Filmmaker should have waited in Brooklyn

film

"Straight Out of Brooklyn"



By Mark Baldridge  
Staff Reporter

Matty Rich is the 19-year-old writer, director and producer of "Straight Out of Brooklyn," the film playing at the Ross (formerly the Sheldon) Film Theater.



Photo courtesy of the Samuel Goldwyn Company

Matty Rich is a 19-year-old who wrote, directed and co-starred in his debut movie, "Straight Out of Brooklyn."

"Spike Lee, move over!" shouts the film's flier, as if there were room for only one young black director at the top. It appears that Spike can keep his spot a little longer, however; at least he has little competition, at the moment, from Rich.

Set in the Red Hook housing projects where Rich spent the first 10 years of his life, "Straight Out of Brooklyn" tells the story of one young man's struggle to escape a dead-end future. He believes that with enough money he could open the doors for himself and his family. But even if his plan were to succeed, the family would still carry around its own personal problems, a point not well recognized in the film.

The boy, Dennis (Lawrence Gilliard Jr.), is heir to a long line of

personal failures — men broken by the "white man." Dennis' father Ray, (well portrayed by George T. Odom) is a heavy drinker, prone to violent outbreaks. His wife (Ann D. Sanders) sports a series of terrible bruises, scars and bumps. Clearly, poverty can be the sum of their difficulties only in the minds of Dennis and Ray.

Any comparison, except physical, between Matty Rich and Spike Lee seems pointless but inevitable. True, Rich appears in his own film and in a character similar to the squeaky Mars Blackmon — and others played by Lee. But it is there that the similarity ends. Matty Rich seems less influenced by the films of Lee than by the moody, washed out dramas of the 1970s.

There is the same relentless gloom, even the same sad violins in the soundtrack. The acting is uneven, though it has its moments. Worse is the distracting editing: Scars move around like caterpillars, people are in two places at once. But these things should not sink a film, given the right elements.

What "Brooklyn" really lacks is good writing, the major component of any "talking" film. The actors are given nothing valuable to say for long periods of time, then they are given stilted and empty speeches. They sound written, certain death to dialogue. A film that is realistic or issue-oriented still must entertain. It still must capture one's attention. It doesn't have to be happy (this film is not); it does have to be good.

The film takes the easy road in presenting us the issues. Drug dealers are bullies, young men have big dreams, little sisters are innocent. The charac-

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Photo courtesy of the Samuel Goldwyn Company

From left: Dennis (Lawrence Gilliard Jr.), Kevin (Mark Malone) and Larry (Matty Rich) are three boyhood friends struggling to escape ghetto life in Rich's "Straight Out of Brooklyn."

Renaissance relived

## Festival creates fantasy world

By Shannon Uehling  
Staff Reporter

Kansas City, Mo., may be just three hours away, but it includes a fantasy world 800 years in the past.

The people of Kansas City are celebrating its 15th annual Renaissance Festival, an event which has seen nearly 2 million people walk through its gates.

Walking into the Renaissance village is like walking out of the 20th century and into a world inhabited by kings, queens, jesters, jugglers, trolls, robbers, jousters and swordsmen.

The event is a fund-raiser for the

Kansas City Art Institute, and for this reason, nothing is cheap. But the experience certainly is worth the expense.

For example, where else can one see a swordsmith making a blade, an ugly troll moving from treetop to treetop, a group of girls plaiting a maypole and fighters jousting on horseback?

Great pains are taken to make everything seem authentic. The costumes are fantastic. The actors stay in character so well that average festival-goers must be careful to avoid slipping into Cockney accents.

The Renaissance village contains

about 150 craftmakers and vendors. Everything from wooden carvings and leather goods to jewelry and clothing can be found. Other booths house psychics, tarot card readers, astrologers and games of skill, such as archery, knife-throwing and "Drench a Wench."

Of course, there are also rows of food vendors as well. No trip to the festival is complete without sampling a turkey drumstick, bringing visions of King Henry VIII to mind. Depending on your preference, you can wash it down with a flask of soda, beer,

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Shannon Uehling/DN

Those visiting the Renaissance Festival in Kansas City, Mo., can experience the full taste of that era, including various musical performances.

## Comedy to raise funds for Midwest homeless



By Wayne Price  
Staff Reporter

Local headlining comedians will gather to raise money for the Lincoln Action Program's Emergency Fund on Sunday at the Royal Grove Nite Club, 340 West Cornhusker Hwy.

Home Box Office, in connection with Laff Trek Comedy, Lincoln CableVision, Dietze Music House and the Royal Grove, will sponsor the HBO Midwest Comic Aid to the Homeless.

Lincolnite Juli Burney is among six Midwest comedians, including three from Lincoln, who will perform in the show. Burney said she is excited that the event is in Lincoln.

Other comedians who will perform include T. Marni Vos and Gayle Becwar of Lincoln, Jek Kelly of Omaha, Terry Wilkerson of Kansas City and Johnny Wayne of Colorado Springs, Colo.

Burney said local comedians had discussed the idea of putting together an event to help the community, but the event came together when Ken Muller, a comedy agent from Sioux City, Iowa, put out a call for comedians to appear in several fund-raisers around the Midwest.

Burney said Muller and the Laff Trek Comedy Circuit are organizing such shows in Iowa and Illinois. All of the shows are part of HBO Midwest Comic Aid and will feature comedians from Colorado

to Illinois.

"This local show is tied into the nationally known Comic Relief program that HBO presents," she said.

Taped segments from the Lincoln show and other performances in Iowa and Illinois may be used during a live HBO special to air in November, or on HBO's Comedy Central, Burney said. She said she expects the performance to last three hours.

Burney, who teaches theater and speech at Doane College in Crete, said her comedy style is "relatable" comedy. In her routine, she includes topics about daily life and communication in relationships. Her comedy has a sarcastic energy which is often left-handed, she said.

This weekend's performance at the Royal Grove also will be broadcast by CableVision on Public Access Channel 14 in October or November, said Dave Grooman, CableVision public access coordinator. CableVision will donate cameras and equipment for the show, Grooman said.

Several local celebrities also are scheduled to appear, including Nebraska state Sen. Dave Landis and Joan Burney, National Mother of the Year.

Local businesses have donated door prizes for the show, including a 24-karat gold-plated golf putter, a guitar, watches and dinner certificates. During breaks in the show, the Lincoln Action Program will provide information about local programs to help the homeless.

Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$12 the day of the show, with no reserved seating. Tickets are available at Dietze Music House the Royal Grove and Community Flowers and Gifts. The show will be open to all ages and will begin at 7:30 p.m.